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# The Color and Texture of Hope: Some Preliminary Findings and Implications for Hope Theory and Counseling Among Diverse Racial/Ethnic Groups

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## RESEARCH REPORTS

# The Color and Texture of Hope: Some Preliminary Findings and Implications for Hope Theory and Counseling Among Diverse Racial/Ethnic Groups

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A rainbow is a prism that sends shards of multicolored light in various directions. It lifts our spirits and makes us think of what is possible. Hope is the same—a personal rainbow of the mind.—(C. R. Snyder, 2002, p. 269)

For decades, researchers have been interested in identifying individual-differences variables that are linked to adjustment. One variable, which is believed not only to represent an important individual-differences predictor of a range of adaptive outcomes but also to have important implications for counseling students, is hope (Snyder, 1995).

### Snyder's Hope Theory

One of the most promising and comprehensive models of hope to emerge in the scientific literature has been the one proffered by Snyder and his colleagues (see Snyder, 2002, for a recent review). According to Snyder's (1994) hope theory, people are believed to be guided by efforts to reach and obtain goals. As a disposition to engage in conscious efforts to obtain a goal, hope is expected to

extend a range of psychological benefits (Snyder, 1994, 2002). However, unlike other positive expectancy variables (Snyder, Sympson, Michael, & Cheavens, 2001), hope can also be understood as a composite of more specific components (Snyder et al., 1991). Specifically, Snyder et al. (1991) have shown that hope, as measured by their Hope Scale, can be taken to represent a cognitive set composed of two relatively distinct ways of thinking about a goal. *Agentic thinking* involves thoughts related to one's successful determination or resolve about reaching goals (e.g., "I meet the goals that I set for myself"), whereas *pathways thinking* involves thoughts about one's effective ability to pursue different means to obtaining goals (e.g., "I can think of many ways to get out of a jam"). According to Snyder et al. (1991), "the[se] two components of hope are reciprocal, additive, and positively related, although they are not synonymous" (p. 571). For example, consistent with the notion that positive thoughts about one's ability to reach important goals (agentic thinking) may foster positive thoughts about how those goals may be met (pathways thinking), and the converse, Snyder et al. (1991) found modest positive associations between agentic thinking and pathways thinking using the Hope Scale across six large samples of college students ( $r$ s ranged from .38 to .46).

Findings from recent studies have offered converging support for key tenets of hope theory. One important tenet is that hope is associated with greater constructive goal-seeking behaviors. Consistent with this view, Chang and DeSimone (2001) found that hope in adults was positively related with engaged coping behaviors and negatively related with disengaged coping behaviors. Indeed, findings from a number of different studies of adults have consistently implicated an important positive association between hope and adaptive problem-solving behaviors (see Rich & Bonner, 2004). For example, on the basis of D'Zurilla, Nezu, and Maydeu-

Olivares's (2002) multidimensional model and measure of social problem solving, Chang (1998) found that high-hope adults, compared with low-hope adults, reported greater positive problem orientation and rational problem solving (adaptive problem-solving behaviors) and lesser negative problem orientation and avoidance style (dysfunctional problem-solving behaviors).

Another important tenet of hope theory is that hope is associated with greater psychological functioning. Consistent with this view, several studies have shown that hope in adults is negatively associated with a host of negative affective conditions, including depressive symptoms (e.g., Chang, 2003; Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Kwon, 2000; Snyder et al., 1991). Alternatively, when looking at associations with traditional indices of positive psychological functioning, namely, positive affect and life satisfaction (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), findings from previous studies have indicated that hope in adults is positively associated with these measures of positive psychological functioning (e.g., Chang, 1998, 2003; Snyder et al., 1991). Thus, consistent with Snyder's (1994, 2002) theory, recent findings have indicated that hope is a variable associated with important indices of behavior and psychological functioning in adults.

### Hope in a Multicultural Context: On the Different Colors of the Rainbow

In a recent comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature on hope, Snyder (2002) noted that the image of a rainbow is often used to symbolize hope. Ironically, what appears to have been critically missed by many researchers studying hope over the past decade is a consideration of the different "colors" of the rainbow. From a multicultural counseling and therapy perspective (Hall, 1997; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996), it would be valuable to appreciate the separate colors of the rainbow in their own right. To date, the vast majority of published and unpublished research examining Snyder's model of hope have been conducted on predominantly European American college students, with little to no examination of possible racial/ethnic variations (C. R. Snyder, personal communication, March 6, 2002; see Muñoz-Dunbar, 1993, for the only notable exception). Thus, given this long history of using mostly European American samples, it would be important to determine whether there may be patterns of convergence and divergence between European Americans and other racial/ethnic groups. Indeed, despite interesting discussions regarding potential variations in hope between different racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Lopez et al., 2000; Snyder, 1994), we know very little about hope across diverse racial/ethnic minority groups (viz., African Americans, Asian Americans, & Latinos).

If one assumes that experiences of hope are universal, then one might predict, that, consistent with the null hypothesis, there are no differences in levels of agentic and pathways thinking across different racial/ethnic groups. However, because hope theory has not been directly tested in diverse racial/ethnic groups, there has been little to no opportunity to determine whether levels of hope, are for the most part, comparable across different groups. Given that components of hope are tied to goal-seeking behaviors as well as to experiences of obstacles in pursuing goals, it would seem plausible to expect some variations on levels of agentic and pathways thinking across different racial/ethnic groups. Indeed, compared with European Americans, Snyder (1995) has contended that

"based on differential goal availability to persons of varying racial backgrounds in the United States, . . . persons of color may have lower hope" (p. 356).

It is clear that, despite efforts to promote multiculturalism in recent years (Sue et al., 1996), different minority racial/ethnic groups continue to experience notable challenges and obstacles in their goal pursuits. For African Americans, for example, a long history of oppression and discrimination against this group has left them with a pervasive sense of mistrust of European Americans (Whaley, 2001). Also, although racism and racial discrimination do not appear to be as overt as in the past, studies continue to show that the lives of African Americans remain burdened by perceptions of racism (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999) and racial discrimination (Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). Although the Latino population has increased by 58% from 1990 to 2000, the percentage of Latinos living below the poverty level has yet remained about the same at 27% in 2000 as that in the previous decade (Marotta & Garcia, 2003). Moreover, some researchers have noted how linguistic barriers and the challenges of acculturation may lead to severely limiting social, economic, political, educational, and health service opportunities for this group (Biever et al., 2002; Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1991; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Even for Asian Americans, a group often perceived to represent a model minority (Yee, 1992), strong implicit and explicit pressures to meet the high expectations of others, particularly of one's parents, may place unique challenges and obstacles to fostering intrapersonal and interpersonal happiness for this group (Uba, 1994). Relatedly, the general lack of culturally sensitive mental health services for Asian Americans may only add to their general perception that there are very limited external resources available to assist them (Sue, 1988, 1998). In all, an appreciation of the unique challenges and barriers faced by different ethnic minority groups seem to make plausible the possibility that, against the null hypothesis, levels of hope may vary across different racial/ethnic groups (Snyder, 1995).

However, the possibility that levels of hope may differ across different racial/ethnic groups need not imply that hope functions differently across different groups. As a positive expectancy variable presumed to have universal relevance (Menninger, 1959; Snyder, 2002), there is little reason to suspect that the function of hope would vary substantively across different racial/ethnic groups. Thus, for example, both components of hope should have positive associations with measures of adaptive problem-solving behaviors (e.g., positive problem orientation) and positive psychological functioning (e.g., life satisfaction). Alternatively, both components of hope should have negative associations with measures of dysfunctional problem-solving behaviors (e.g., negative problem orientation) and negative affective conditions (e.g., negative affect). Consistent with these general expectations, recent studies have shown that, although some personality variables can vary in levels across different racial/ethnic groups, the function of these personality variables can be quite similar across different groups (e.g., Chang, Watkins, & Banks, 2004).

### Purpose of the Present Study

Given the aforementioned concerns and limitations associated with research on hope in diverse groups, the goals of the present study were to (a) determine whether there are mean racial/ethnic

differences on measures of agentic and pathways thinking, (b) determine whether there are racial/ethnic differences in how components of hope relate to important variables that have been linked to hope) (viz., problem-solving behaviors, life satisfaction, and positive and negative affect, and (c) conduct an initial evaluation of important predictors of hope on the basis of the present study's measures for each racial/ethnic group. Given some of the challenges experienced by racial/ethnic minorities, and consistent with Snyder's (1995) contention that hope may be lower in racial/ethnic minorities than in European Americans, we predicted that agency and pathways thinking would be lower in African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans than in European Americans. Alternatively, consistent with the general tenet that hope represents a positive expectancy variable that has universal relevance (Menninger, 1959; Snyder, 2002), we predicted that the function of agency and pathways thinking would be similar across the different racial/ethnic groups. Finally, with regard to identifying important predictors of hope, we did not make any specific predictions regarding possible similarities or differences in predictors of hope across different racial/ethnic groups. To date, much of the research on hope has focused on the possible consequences, and not the possible antecedents, of hope (Snyder, 2002). However, by examining predictors of hope, we hoped to draw some possible implications for instilling hope in different racial/ethnic groups.

Given the small sample sizes reported in the present study, it appears that a few words are in order. As most researchers have experienced when attempting to conduct a study involving diverse racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Castro & Rice, 2003), we did not expect to obtain large sample sizes of different racial/ethnic minority participants for our study. However, we did not see this as a sufficient limitation in conducting our study. First, unpublished findings reported by Muñoz-Dunbar (1993) have indicated that the correlation between hope and positive affect can be quite large (e.g., for African Americans,  $r = .73$ ). Thus, for large effects, a researcher would be able to obtain a power of .99 ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in computing correlations with samples involving as few as 16 participants (Murphy & Myers, 1998). This is to say that significant results can be found in small samples. Second, as research on Snyder's hope theory passes the 10-year mark (Snyder, 2002), we felt that this important theory of human behavior and functioning should not go another decade largely silent in response to the question of whether it is a useful theory for studying and working with diverse racial/ethnic groups.

## Method

### Participants

Two hundred fifty-nine (67 men, 192 women) self-identified European Americans, 30 (9 men, 21 women) African Americans, 35 (7 men, 28 women) Latinos, and 50 (13 men, 37 women) Asian Americans from a large public university in the northeast participated in the present study during mass testing. Five (2 men, 3 women) participants did not self-identify their racial/ethnic group, and 6 (1 man, 5 women) participants identified themselves as Native American. Accordingly, we did not look at the responses provided by this group of participants. All participants were enrolled in an introductory psychology course and fulfilled a course

requirement by participating. Ages ranged from 17 to 25 years of age, with a mean of 18.4 years.

### Measures

*Hope agency and pathways.* To assess hope-related agentic and pathways thinking, we used the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), a 12-item measure of hope consisting of a four-item Agentic Thinking scale (e.g., "I meet the goals that I set for myself") and a four-item Pathways Thinking scale (e.g., "I can think of many ways to get out of a jam"). Four items are filler items. Respondents are asked to rate items across a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*definitely false*) to 4 (*definitely true*). Studies using the Hope Scale in both healthy and patient populations have found it to be a valid and useful measure of hope (see Snyder, 2002, for a recent review). Factor analytic and correlational findings from studies using the Hope Scale have provided support for the notion that hope is composed of two distinguishable components, namely, agentic and pathways thinking (e.g., Babyak, Snyder, & Yoshinobu, 1993; Chang, 2003; Snyder et al., 1991). In general, higher agentic thinking scores reflect greater thoughts about being able to successfully obtain a goal, whereas higher pathways thinking scores reflect greater thoughts about finding ways to reach a goal.

*Problem solving.* To assess problem solving style, we used the Social Problem-Solving Inventory—Revised (D'Zurilla et al., 2002), a 52-item measure of problem solving derived from social problem-solving theory (D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Mayden-Olivares, 2004). It consists of five scales that measure two adaptive dimensions (positive problem orientation & rational problem solving) and three dysfunctional dimensions (negative problem orientation, impulsivity/carelessness style, & avoidance style). Respondents are asked to rate items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*not at all true of me*) to 4 (*extremely true of me*). The Positive Problem Orientation scale taps an adaptive, problem-solving cognitive set (e.g., "When I have a problem, I usually believe that there is a solution for it"). The Negative Problem Orientation scale measures a dysfunctional cognitive-emotional set (e.g., "I usually feel threatened and afraid when I have an important problem to solve"). The Rational Problem Solving scale assesses the rational, deliberate, and systematic application of effective problem-solving strategies and techniques (e.g., "When I am attempting to solve a problem, I usually think of as many alternative solutions as possible until I cannot come up with any more ideas"). The Impulsivity/Carelessness Style scale taps a deficient problem-solving pattern characterized by active attempts to apply problem-solving strategies and techniques, but these attempts are narrowed, impulsive, careless, hurried, and incomplete (e.g., "When I am attempting to solve a problem, I usually act on the first idea that comes to mind"). The Avoidance Style scale assesses another defective problem-solving pattern characterized by procrastination, passivity or inaction, and dependency (e.g., "I usually prefer to avoid problems instead of confronting them and being forced to deal with them"). Higher scores on positive problem orientation and on rational problem solving are indicative of greater adaptive problem-solving behaviors, whereas higher scores on negative problem orientation, impulsivity/carelessness style, and avoidance style are indicative of greater dysfunctional problem-solving behaviors.



*Positive and negative affect.* To assess positive and negative affect, we used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), a 20-item self-report measure of positive and negative affect, with 10 items assessing for positive affect (e.g., "enthusiasm") and 10 items for negative affect (e.g., "irritable"). Respondents are asked to rate how they feel for each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly*) to 5 (*extremely*). To assess for affect in the present study, instructions asked how respondents felt over the past week (i.e., "Indicate to what extent you felt this way over the *past week*"). Higher scores reflect greater positive and negative affect.

*Life satisfaction.* To assess life satisfaction, we used the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), a five-item measure of a person's satisfaction with life as a whole (e.g., "I am satisfied with my life") rather than in any specific domain. Respondents are asked to rate the extent of agreement to these items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflect greater life satisfaction.

### Procedure

All study measures were administered in a large mass testing session. Of the initial samples, 11 European Americans, 2 Latinos, and 4 Asian Americans failed to complete all study measures; thus, their responses were subsequently dropped from the study. This left a total of 248 European Americans, 30 African Americans, 33 Latinos, and 46 Asian Americans whose responses were used in subsequent analyses. Given the unequal sample size obtained between European American and non-European American participants, we elected to establish more comparable power for our analyses by only using responses provided by a random sample of 46 European Americans.

Participants were not made aware of the purpose of the study until after they had completed all measures. To protect the participants' anonymity, only participant numbers were placed on the instruments. In addition, all participants signed separate consent forms that indicated that all test data would be kept strictly confidential.

## Results

### *Are There Racial/Ethnic Variations in Levels of Hope?*

To examine for differences on hope components between different racial/ethnic groups, we compared mean levels on agentic and pathways thinking across European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans by conducting a series of univariate *t* tests. The results of our between-groups comparisons, including comparisons on social problem solving, positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction, are presented in Table 1. As the table shows, only one significant difference emerged on agentic thinking; namely, Latinos ( $M = 12.67$ ,  $SD = 2.13$ ) reported levels of agentic thinking that were significantly greater than those reported by European Americans ( $M = 11.74$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ) and by African Americans ( $M = 12.07$ ,  $SD = 2.53$ ). On pathways thinking, there was no significant difference between African Americans ( $M = 13.00$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) and Latinos ( $M = 12.54$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ) on this component of hope. In turn, these comparable levels were significantly greater than those reported by European Americans ( $M = 11.76$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ) and by Asian Americans ( $M = 11.61$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ).

It is worth noting that, on dimensions of social problem solving, no significant differences emerged between European Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans on positive problem orientation. However, African Americans ( $M = 13.00$ ,  $SD = 4.29$ ) reported significantly greater levels on positive problem orientation, compared with European Americans ( $M = 11.21$ ,  $SD = 3.41$ ). On negative problem orientation, there was no significant difference on this dimension across the four racial/ethnic groups. On rational problem solving, European Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans reported levels that were comparable with each other. However, Latinos ( $M = 52.39$ ,  $SD = 10.05$ ) reported significantly greater levels of rational problem solving than those reported by European Americans ( $M = 45.67$ ,  $SD = 13.07$ ), and African Americans ( $M = 44.90$ ,  $SD = 19.38$ ). On impulsivity/carelessness style, no significant difference emerged between European Americans ( $M = 16.37$ ,  $SD = 5.85$ ), African Americans ( $M = 18.03$ ,  $SD = 7.19$ ), and Asian Americans ( $M = 17.24$ ,  $SD = 6.64$ ). However, Latinos ( $M = 13.03$ ,  $SD = 8.30$ ) reported levels

Table 1  
*Racial/Ethnic Differences in Study Measures*

Criterion	European American ( $n = 46$ )			African American ( $n = 30$ )			Latino ( $n = 33$ )			Asian American ( $n = 46$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Agency	11.74 <sup>a</sup>	1.96	.83	12.07 <sup>a</sup>	2.53	.86	12.67 <sup>b</sup>	2.13	.82	12.13 <sup>a,b</sup>	2.16
Pathway	11.76 <sup>a</sup>	1.74	.82	13.00 <sup>b</sup>	1.58	.84	12.54 <sup>b</sup>	1.25	.76	11.61 <sup>a,c</sup>	1.60
Positive problem orientation	11.21 <sup>a</sup>	3.41	.81	13.00 <sup>b</sup>	4.29	.84	12.48 <sup>a,b</sup>	2.75	.78	12.48 <sup>a,b</sup>	3.36
Negative problem orientation	20.24 <sup>a</sup>	8.11	.88	19.63 <sup>a</sup>	10.29	.89	17.21 <sup>a</sup>	10.30	.85	17.54 <sup>a</sup>	7.00
Rational problem solving	45.67 <sup>a</sup>	13.07	.88	44.90 <sup>a</sup>	19.38	.87	52.39 <sup>b</sup>	10.05	.87	48.67 <sup>a,b</sup>	11.84
Impulsivity/carelessness style	16.37 <sup>a</sup>	5.85	.81	18.03 <sup>a</sup>	7.19	.83	13.03 <sup>b</sup>	8.30	.82	17.24 <sup>a</sup>	6.64
Avoidance style	13.20 <sup>a</sup>	5.99	.84	12.40 <sup>a,b</sup>	7.38	.86	8.79 <sup>c</sup>	7.29	.85	9.67 <sup>b,c</sup>	5.30
Positive affect	34.11 <sup>a</sup>	7.31	.88	38.13 <sup>b</sup>	7.21	.89	35.45 <sup>a,b</sup>	5.15	.84	36.72 <sup>a,b</sup>	6.55
Negative affect	21.86 <sup>a</sup>	6.93	.88	19.90 <sup>a</sup>	8.71	.87	20.73 <sup>a</sup>	6.51	.86	20.39 <sup>a</sup>	4.60
Life satisfaction	23.22 <sup>a</sup>	6.44	.91	26.23 <sup>b</sup>	6.38	.90	20.09 <sup>c</sup>	6.92	.87	24.78 <sup>a,b</sup>	6.01

*Note.* For European Americans,  $n = 46$ ; for African Americans,  $n = 30$ ; for Latinos,  $n = 33$ ; for Asian Americans,  $n = 46$ . Means with different superscripts indicate a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between racial/ethnic groups.

on impulsivity/carelessness style that were significantly lower than those reported by the other three racial/ethnic groups. Finally, no significant difference emerged on avoidance style between European Americans and African Americans. Likewise, Latinos and Asian Americans reported levels that were comparable with each other. However, Latinos ( $M = 8.79$ ,  $SD = 7.29$ ) and Asian Americans ( $M = 9.67$ ,  $SD = 5.30$ ) reported significantly lower levels on avoidance style, compared with those reported by European Americans ( $M = 13.20$ ,  $SD = 5.99$ ) and African Americans ( $M = 12.40$ ,  $SD = 7.38$ ).

On positive and negative affect, no significant difference emerged on positive affect between European Americans ( $M = 34.11$ ,  $SD = 7.31$ ), Latinos ( $M = 35.45$ ,  $SD = 5.15$ ), and Asian Americans ( $M = 36.72$ ,  $SD = 6.55$ ). However, African Americans ( $M = 38.13$ ,  $SD = 7.21$ ) reported the highest level of positive affect, compared with those reported by the other three racial/ethnic groups. No significant difference emerged on negative affect between any of the four racial/ethnic groups.

Finally, on life satisfaction, significant differences emerged between European Americans, African Americans, and Latinos, with Latinos ( $M = 20.09$ ,  $SD = 6.92$ ) reporting the lowest levels of life satisfaction across the four racial/ethnic groups and with African Americans ( $M = 26.23$ ,  $SD = 6.38$ ) reporting significantly greater life satisfaction compared with European Americans ( $M = 23.22$ ,  $SD = 6.44$ ) and Latinos. Asian Americans ( $M = 24.78$ ,  $SD = 6.01$ ) reported levels of life satisfaction that were comparable with those reported by European Americans and by African Americans.

In summary, these comparative results for the four racial/ethnic groups not only indicate variations on levels of agentic and pathways thinking but also point to complex variations on levels of social problem solving, positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction.

#### *Does Hope Function in the Same Manner Across Different Racial/Ethnic Groups?*

To determine whether hope components function in the same or different manner across different racial/ethnic groups, we computed the correlations between hope components with dimensions of social problem solving, positive and negative affect, and life

satisfaction for each of the four racial/ethnic groups. The results of these computations are presented in Table 2.

Within each racial/ethnic group, results indicated that, where a component of hope had a significant association with another study variable, it did so in a manner as predicted by hope theory. For example, across the four racial/ethnic groups, agentic thinking was positively associated with pathways thinking. Likewise, across the four groups, agentic thinking was positively associated with positive problem orientation (an adaptive problem-solving dimension), whereas it was negatively associated with avoidance style (a dysfunctional problem-solving dimension). Between racial/ethnic groups, we found no differences in comparing the magnitude of the associations that were found to be significant across all four racial/ethnic groups. For example, the significant association found between agentic and pathways thinking in each of the four racial/ethnic groups was not found to be significantly different between the four groups.

In summary, these correlational results indicate that the function of hope may be more similar than dissimilar across the four racial/ethnic groups.

#### *What Predicts Hope in Different Racial/Ethnic Groups?*

Although we failed to find strong differences in examining the significant associations obtained across the four racial/ethnic groups, it was clear from our correlational results that agentic and pathways thinking did not have significant associations with all of the variables examined in the present study across all four groups. For example, whereas agentic thinking was positively associated with rational problem solving in African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, it was not associated with rational problem solving in European Americans. Because hope is believed to be both the cause and consequence of adaptive outcomes and behaviors (Snyder, 2002), we decided to probe our data further to identify the best predictors of hope components on the basis of the present study's measures for each of the four racial/ethnic groups. Accordingly, we conducted a series of forward stepwise regression analyses for each hope component. The predictors included in the initial or starting equation were all five social problem-solving dimensions, positive and negative affect, and life satisfaction. Separate analyses were conducted for each racial/ethnic group.

Table 2  
*Correlations Between Hope Components and Problem Solving, Positive and Negative Affect, and Life Satisfaction*

Criterion	European American ( $n = 46$ )		African American ( $n = 30$ )		Latino ( $n = 33$ )		Asian American ( $n = 46$ )	
	Agency	Pathway	Agency	Pathway	Agency	Pathway	Agency	Pathway
Agency	—	.40**	—	.53**	—	.40*	—	.44**
Positive problem orientation	.47***	.36*	.59***	.80***	.56***	.06	.40**	.56***
Negative problem orientation	-.45**	-.09	-.81***	-.73***	-.20	.11	-.29	-.42**
Rational problem solving	.25	.31*	.46***	.71***	.76***	.20	.49***	.46***
Impulsivity/carelessness style	-.18	-.19	-.63***	-.34	-.33	.02	-.36*	-.37*
Avoidance style	-.48***	-.13	-.37*	-.50***	-.44**	.17	-.39**	-.24
Positive affect	.30*	.47***	.71***	.47**	.43*	.14	.60***	.46***
Negative affect	-.31*	-.32**	-.45*	-.29	-.07	-.17	-.31*	-.08
Life satisfaction	.54***	.32**	.69***	.25	.44**	.48**	.55***	.29*

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Only predictors that accounted for a significant amount of the variance in each outcome criterion were included in the final model. Results of these analyses for each of the four racial/ethnic groups are presented in Table 3.

For European Americans, agentic thinking was found to be strongly predicted by life satisfaction and avoidance style, in that order. The final model accounted for 37.8% of the variance in agentic thinking,  $F(2, 43) = 13.08, p < .001$ . For this group, pathways thinking was strongly predicted by positive affect only. The final model accounted for 22.1% of the variance in pathways thinking,  $F(1, 44) = 12.51, p < .001$ . For African Americans, agentic thinking was predicted by negative problem orientation, positive affect, positive problem orientation, avoidance style, and life satisfaction, in that order. The final model accounted for 99.1% of the variance in agentic thinking,  $F(5, 24) = 531.89, p < .001$ . For this group, pathways thinking was predicted by positive problem orientation, avoidance style, and positive affect, in that order. The final model accounted for 83.1% of the variance in pathways thinking,  $F(3, 26) = 42.56, p < .001$ . For Latinos, agentic thinking was predicted by rational problem solving, life satisfaction, and positive problem orientation, in that order. The final model accounted for 85.1% of the variance in agentic thinking,  $F(3, 29) =$

55.27,  $p < .001$ . For this group, pathways thinking was predicted by life satisfaction only. The final model accounted for 23.3% of the variance in life satisfaction,  $F(1, 31) = 9.44, p < .01$ . For Asian Americans, agentic thinking was predicted by positive affect, rational problem solving, and negative affect, in that order. The final model accounted for 57.8% of the variance in agentic thinking,  $F(3, 42) = 19.00, p < .001$ . For this group, pathways thinking was predicted by positive problem orientation and positive affect. The final model accounted for 46.8% of the variance in pathways thinking,  $F(2, 43) = 18.95, p < .001$ .

Our regression results indicated both similarities and differences in predictors of the two hope components. For example, life satisfaction was an important predictor of agentic thinking for European Americans ( $\beta = .42$ ), African Americans ( $\beta = .21$ ), and for Latinos ( $\beta = .42$ ), but not for Asian Americans. Positive affect was an important predictor of pathways thinking for European Americans ( $\beta = .47$ ), African Americans ( $\beta = .29$ ), and for Asian Americans ( $\beta = .40$ ), but not for Latinos. Alternatively, the strongest predictor of agentic thinking for European Americans was life satisfaction ( $\beta = .42$ ); for African Americans, it was negative problem orientation ( $\beta = -.83$ ); for Latinos, it was rational problem solving ( $\beta = .61$ ); and for Asian Americans, it was positive affect ( $\beta = .53$ ). The strongest predictor of pathways thinking for European Americans was positive affect ( $\beta = .47$ ); for African Americans, it was positive problem orientation ( $\beta = .75$ ); for Latinos, it was life satisfaction ( $\beta = .48$ ); and for Asian Americans, it was positive problem orientation ( $\beta = .51$ ).

In summary, these regression results for the four racial/ethnic groups indicate that the potential sources of hope may vary as a function of both the specific component of hope examined and the specific racial/ethnic group studied.

## Discussion

In an attempt to appraise the value of Snyder's (1994, 2002) hope theory for diverse racial/ethnic groups, we compared levels of agentic and pathways thinking (the necessary and sufficient components of hope) and their relations with important external variables in European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Additionally, in an attempt to identify potential implications for promoting hope across different racial/ethnic groups, we sought possible variations in predictors or sources of hope.

### *Hope Comes in Different Colors: Racial/Ethnic Variations in Levels of Hope Components*

Results of comparative analyses indicated some interesting and unexpected findings. In contrast to expectations, we did not find strong support for the possibility that racial/ethnic minorities experience lower levels of hope than European Americans. Asian Americans were not found to differ significantly on levels of agentic and pathways thinking, compared with European Americans. These comparative findings for Asian Americans are consistent not only with the null hypothesis but with findings obtained from studies on dispositional optimism (a variable related to hope). For example, findings from comparative studies have also shown that levels on dispositional optimism are not significantly different between Asian Americans and European Americans (Chang, 1996,

Table 3  
*Stepwise Regression Analyses Showing Amount of Variance Accounted for by Significant Predictors of Hope Components for Each Racial/Ethnic Group*

Group/hope component	$\beta$	$R$	$R^2$	$df$	$F$
European Americans ( $n = 46$ )					
Agency		.61	.38	2,43	13.08***
Life satisfaction	.42**				
Avoidance style	-.31*				
Pathway		.47	.22	1,44	12.51***
Positive affect	.47***				
African Americans ( $n = 30$ )					
Agency		.99	.99	5,24	531.89***
Negative problem orientation	-.83***				
Positive affect	.64***				
Positive problem orientation	.37***				
Avoidance style	-.36***				
Life satisfaction	.21***				
Pathway		.91	.83	3,26	42.56***
Positive problem orientation	.75***				
Avoidance style	-.48***				
Positive affect	.29**				
Latinos ( $n = 33$ )					
Agency		.92	.85	3,29	55.27***
Rational problem solving	.61***				
Life satisfaction	.42***				
Positive problem orientation	.29**				
Pathway		.48	.23	1,31	9.44**
Life satisfaction	.48**				
Asian Americans ( $n = 46$ )					
Agency		.76	.58	3,42	19.00***
Positive affect	.53***				
Rational problem solving	.36***				
Negative affect	-.26**				
Pathway		.68	.47	2,43	18.95***
Positive problem orientation	.51***				
Positive affect	.40***				

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

2002). However, significant differences were found between African Americans and European Americans, and between Latinos and European Americans. Specifically, although no significant difference emerged on agentic thinking between African Americans and European Americans, African Americans reported greater pathways thinking, compared with European Americans. In addition, Latinos reported greater agentic thinking and pathways thinking, compared with European Americans. Thus, these obtained findings for African Americans and Latinos were in the opposite direction from our initial predictions.

The present comparative results appear to represent something of a paradox. How is it that some marginalized racial/ethnic minority groups have more hope than, if not as much hope as, European Americans? Resolving this paradox may require us to think about hope differently, at least in considering racial/ethnic variations of hope in adults. For example, in contrast to Snyder's (1995) belief that experience of goal-related obstacles for racial/ethnic minorities may result in lowering their levels of hope, it may be that early experience or anticipation of goal-related obstacles for members of these groups may represent opportunities for developing *more* hope, especially more pathways thinking, in later adulthood. Some findings from a recent study suggest that very young racial/ethnic-minority children are able to anticipate future obstacles as a function of their racial/ethnic-minority status. Specifically, in a study involving first and sixth graders, Bigler, Averhart, and Liben (2003) found that African American children reported that African Americans, compared with European Americans, were less likely to perform high-status jobs (e.g., doctor, business executive, scientist) than medium-status jobs (e.g., bus driver, hair dresser, police officer, bank teller) and low-status jobs (e.g., car washer, cashier, fast-food worker). By anticipating potential obstacles or problems early on, some members of racial/ethnic-minority groups may be able to advance situations for themselves in which they can manage or circumvent exposure to and experience of goal-limiting barriers in their future. Thus, some African Americans who anticipate being a victim of racial discrimination may focus proactively on promoting greater cohesion, collaboration, and community with other African Americans (Tatum, 1997), as well as with members of other marginalized groups. Some Latinos who anticipate problems with language or acculturation may focus on ways to effectively foster knowledge and skills valued in Latino and European cultures (Suarez, Fowers, Garwood, & Szapocznik, 1997). Asian Americans who anticipate very limited support for mental health services may focus on establishing or bolstering supportive connections with family members, friends, and community leaders (Lee & Davis, 2000). In these ways, it may be possible for some racial/ethnic minorities to garner high or adaptive levels of hope despite, or because of, their consideration of potential future obstacles. Indeed, given that we studied college students attending a "more selective" public university in the northeast, it may not be too surprising that we found African American and Latino students to express greater levels of hope, compared with European American students. After all, students from the former two racial/ethnic groups are likely to represent those who have found ways to "make it" in their pursuit of higher education in America and all that it may afford.

### *Hope as a Universally Positive Variable: Racial/Ethnic Similarities in the Relational Pattern of Hope Components With Other Important Variables*

Implicit within hope theory is the contention that hope represents a positive expectancy variable that can be applied universally to study behavior and psychological functioning in diverse groups (Snyder, 2002). In that regard, the present correlational findings provide some support for this basic contention. As expected, we found that the two core components of hope had a positive association with each other in each of the four racial/ethnic groups examined. When we examined the significant associations that emerged across all racial/ethnic groups, we found components of hope to have positive associations with positive measures of behavior (e.g., rational problem solving) and psychological functioning (e.g., life satisfaction) and to have negative associations with negative measures of behavior (e.g., impulsivity/carelessness style) and psychological functioning (e.g., negative affect). Alternatively, we did not find a single instance in which a significant association involving a component of hope was in a direction opposite to what would be predicted by hope theory. In comparing the magnitude of the associations found to be significant across all racial/ethnic groups, it is worth noting that we failed to find any evidence of significant racial/ethnic differences between the different groups. In all, our correlational findings appear to support the notion of hope as a universally valid positive expectancy variable that functions similarly across different racial/ethnic groups.

### *Hope Comes in Different Textures: Cultivating Hope in Diverse Racial/Ethnic Groups*

Although our correlational findings indicated that the function of hope may be quite similar across different racial/ethnic groups, results of our regression analyses indicate that, apart from mean differences in levels of hope, there may be important nuances that distinguish the texture of hope across different racial/ethnic groups. Specifically, in examining the present behavioral and psychological variables as potential sources of agentic and pathways thinking, we found evidence indicating important similarities and differences in the texture of hope across different racial/ethnic groups.

With regard to similarities, for all racial/ethnic groups, except for Asian Americans, life satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of agentic thinking ( $\beta$ s = .21 to .42). Thus, being satisfied with one's life appears to be a potentially important source of agentic thinking (e.g., belief that one has the ability to successfully reach a desired goal or outcome), which is common to several racial/ethnic groups. If one considers Asian Americans to be, unlike other racial/ethnic groups, motivated more by self-criticism than by self-enhancement (Chang, 2007; Chang & Asakawa, 2003; Chang, Asakawa, & Sanna, 2001), then our findings are consistent with Oishi, Wyer, and Colcombe's (2000) recent finding that European Americans are more likely to use life satisfaction to predict future outcomes than Asian Americans. Alternatively, for all racial/ethnic groups, except for Latinos, positive affect was found to be an important predictor of pathways thinking ( $\beta$ s = .29 to .47). Thus, feeling good appears to be a potentially important source of pathways thinking (e.g., belief that



one can successfully pursue different routes to obtain a desired goal or outcome), which is common to several racial/ethnic groups. These findings involving positive affect appear to sit well with a key tenet of the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) that suggests positive emotions, which can influence the experience of positive affect, help broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn help build important and useful resources for people. However, our findings for Latinos suggest that, insofar as positive emotions are involved in the experience of positive affect, positive emotions may not necessarily lead to uniform broadening effects in all groups.

Given that important differences were also found in predictors of hope across the different racial/ethnic groups in our study, we now focus on these differences to consider potential practical implications for promoting hope in different racial/ethnic groups. For European Americans, life satisfaction was found to be the strongest predictor of agentic thinking, whereas positive affect was found to be the only predictor of pathways thinking. Thus, one might speculate about how attempts to foster greater agentic and pathways thinking in this group may be achieved by using interventions that at least target the promotion of greater life satisfaction and positive affect in this group. For African Americans, lack of a negative problem orientation was found to be the strongest predictor of agentic thinking, whereas positive problem orientation was found to be the strongest predictor of pathways thinking. Accordingly, one might consider how attempts to foster greater hope in this group may be reached by using interventions that at least target a reduction in negative problem orientation and an increase in positive problem orientation. For Latinos, rational problem solving was found to be the strongest predictor of agentic thinking, whereas life satisfaction was found to be the only predictor of pathways thinking. Hence, one might speculate again about how attempts to foster greater hope in this group may be realized by using interventions that at least promote greater rational problem solving and life satisfaction. Finally, for Asian Americans, positive affect was found to be the strongest predictor of agentic thinking, whereas positive problem orientation was found to be the strongest predictor of pathways thinking. For this reason, one might consider how attempts to foster greater hope in this group may be realized by using interventions that at least target the promotion of positive affect and positive problem orientation. Although for most European Americans a variety of standard cognitive-behavioral interventions, including cognitive therapy (e.g., Beck, 1976; Ellis & Dryden, 1997) and problem-solving training (Chang, D'Zurilla, & Sanna, 2004; D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1999), may prove effective for promoting greater levels of hope and adjustment (DeRubeis & Crits-Christoph, 1998), it is likely that, in working with racial/ethnic minorities, additional considerations (e.g., language barriers, racial/ethnic identity, acculturation, and perceived discrimination) may need to be incorporated to make such interventions meaningful and effective for members of minority groups (Helms & Cook, 1999; Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2002).

Clearly, much more research is needed before we can draw definitive implications for cultivating agentic and pathways thinking across and within different racial/ethnic groups (Snyder, Ilardi, Cheavans, et al., 2000). Nonetheless, our comparative results and results from our regression analyses do

implicate a greater need for researchers to consider variations in both the color and texture of hope when studying different racial/ethnic groups.

### *Some Limitations of the Present Study*

It is important to note a few limitations of the present study and directions for future research. First, as is typical in psychological studies on racial/ethnic variations, we were not able to obtain very large samples of African Americans, Latinos, or Asian Americans in the present study. Although significant findings emerged within these three racial/ethnic groups, it would be important, however, to replicate the present findings in larger samples so that within-group variations may also be investigated. Second, although the present study examined the relations between components of hope with several basic concomitants of hope in different racial/ethnic groups, it may be useful in future studies to examine the relations of hope with variables specific to each group. For example, in studying the nomological net of hope in Asian Americans, it may be interesting to examine how agentic and pathways thinking relate to different Asian values (e.g., conformity to norms, family recognition of achievement, emotional self-control, & filial piety; Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999). Third, as with a majority of the studies conducted on hope, the present study relied on self-report measures. It would be useful in future studies, for example, to determine whether components of hope in different racial/ethnic groups relate to objective indices of behavior and adjustment in the same or similar manner across diverse racial/ethnic groups. Finally, the present findings may be limited in generalizability to racial/ethnic groups drawn from college student populations. For example, young adults who are unable to pursue aspirations of higher education may differ considerably in their level and function of hope from the young adults examined in the present study.

### *Conclusion: The Rainbows of Hope in Multicultural Perspective*

The present study looked at the components of hope across European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Although our findings are preliminary, they are the first to provide clear indications of why one should always distinguish between agentic and pathways thinking in studying Snyder's (1994, 2002) hope model and why we need to consider important variables such as hope from within a multicultural perspective. No doubt, more research is needed to build upon the present findings so that we may better and more fully appreciate the many causes, correlates, and consequences associated with the different colors and textures of hope within our diverse and changing society.

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